

Communicability of Emotions in Computer-mediated Communication.

Johannes Hartig¹, Nina Jude² & Helfried Moosbrugger³

The chances, advantages and disadvantages of computer-mediated communication (CMC) are the source of contradictory opinions and research findings. Despite of the advantages of high-speed world-wide communication, critics describe CMC as unpersonal and emotionally restrained, due to the lack of nonverbal communication channels, which might cause emotional and social isolation.

A Web-based questionnaire was used to rate different media regarding their suitability for emotion mediation. A strong effect of media and an interaction between media and direction of communication could be found. Furthermore gender differences in communicating emotions, which are known in face-to-face communication, were also apparent in CMC.

We further investigated the use of graphical emoticons, which may serve as an alternative way to communicate emotions. Knowledge, the frequency of use and the subjective attributed meaning of emoticons were assessed. Only a limited number of different emoticons are relevant and in use. A higher frequency of use of emoticons is positively correlated with the perceived communicability of emotions in CMC.

1 Institut für Psychologie der J. W. Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, Mertonstr. 17, 60054 Frankfurt.
E-mail: j.hartig@psych.uni-frankfurt.de
2 E-mail: jude@stud.uni-frankfurt.de
3 E-mail: moosbrugger@psych.uni-frankfurt.de